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Some in Foothills resigned to tribe's stance on freeway

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As Gila River Indian Community officials continue to strongly oppose the South Mountain Freeway on their land, reactions from Ahwatukee Foothills residents ranged from irritation to resignation at being left in limbo.

Although anything can happen between now and the fall of 2007, when a final decision on the freeway will be made, it continues to look as if it will end up in Ahwatukee Foothills if it is built.

William Rhodes, the Gila River governor since January, wants a referendum that would allow a study into the feasibility of putting the freeway on reservation land south of Ahwatukee Foothills because of the potential for economic development. But so far he has been unable to get the community's 17-member council to consider the matter.

Greta Rogers, 76, said she wasn't surprised at the continuing opposition because Gila River residents have told her they oppose the freeway for the same reasons many Ahwatukee residents do.

"They don't want the noise, they don't want the pollution, they don't want the entrée for the subliminal characters," she said.

Kevin Konnis, 27, an architecture student, also wasn't surprised.

"As time goes on, it seems to me . . . like it's going to be built no matter what the people say," Konnis said. "They're really hellbent on building the freeway, and unfortunately for Ahwatukee it seems like that's where it's going to go."

He doesn't believe the Arizona Department of Transportation has invested much energy into pursuing the Gila River community.

"They're not really serious about negotiating with the Indian community," he said. "They just want to take the easy route, make it appear that they're negotiating but not putting too much effort into it."

Teri Pinkstaff, 44, a saleswoman, said she's disappointed in the Gila River community's opposition because she believes it's in their best interests.

"I appreciate that their land is sacred, but it's hard for us to contemplate our change of life because they can't give us just a little easement."

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